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# RENEWING IRELAND

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## RENEWING IRELAND

The 2011 General Election is different to any other in our country's history.

Ireland has been damaged by reckless financial policies, lax regulation and a failed political system. But our resilience should not be underestimated, nor our capacity to renew and rebuild.

In restoring our economy and supporting our businesses and industries, there is an opportunity to redirect our national efforts towards the opportunities of the future. We can **play to our strengths** and in doing so, enjoy tremendous international competitive advantage.

Over the last three and a half years in government the Greens have prepared the ground for an economic reorientation away from speculation and needless consumption of scarce resources, and towards a sustainable path where economy growth is not the only indicator of our society's well-being.

The Greens have long been the persistent but vocal lobby for far-reaching reform of our institutions and systems of governance. But now all of the political parties agree that change must be radical and swift. So following the collapse of confidence in our political system, there is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to transform a politics – and to deliver real, accountable, **better leadership**.

And in creating a **better Ireland** for the generations that will come after us, we plan to continue to protect the most vulnerable in the face of harsh economic circumstances. We will radically overhaul the social welfare system to make it a more equitable and flexible system. And we will protect and enhance our investment in the social capital of our country; our schools, our universities and our community facilities.

We have an unrivalled **green vision for Ireland**. And our record on environmental protection is beyond reproach. While some have begun to pay lip service to 'green issues',

a core understanding of sustainability has driven the Green Party throughout its 30 years of experience in Irish politics. We have an ambitious plan that will take us beyond our reliance on imported fossil fuels, allowing Ireland to become an oil free economy by 2030.

While elections frequently bring out the worst in the political classes, we are committed to being honest and responsible: as we have always been.

This is not the time for auction politics. Ireland simply cannot afford it.

This is not the time for politicians to make promises that cannot be delivered upon. Above all else, this general election should and must be about honesty.

In 2007 we chose to enter government to try and change the system and get things done. And in government we delivered. We did what we said we would do: on planning, energy, education, transport and equality. We changed people's lives for the better. We were the successful bit of the last government and we still have a lot to offer.

The Green Party has honest policies that work. We believe that a Green voice in Irish politics is essential to hold others to account, to push the reform and change agenda – to renew Ireland. Unlike other parties, we have a track record in this respect.

On February 25th, we have a once in a lifetime chance to change this country for the better.

Join us in Renewing Ireland.  
Support us. Vote for us.



**JOHN GORMLEY TD**

Leader of the Green Party / Comhaontas Glas





# ***PLAYING TO OUR STRENGTHS***

*Rebuilding a  
vibrant and  
sustainable  
Irish economy*

## PLAYING TO OUR STRENGTHS

### Rebuilding a vibrant and sustainable Irish economy

***Our economic recovery must be green. Anything else will be unsustainable and will not last.***

***Our new economy must acknowledge that we will reach a peak in oil production in the near future. Our new economic system must reject the greed of a few in favour of prosperity for all. Our new economic system must be built on solid and sustainable foundations. Our new economy will be green.***

#### Smart green jobs

In Government, the Green Party has facilitated the creation of over 20,000 Green Sector jobs and has plans to create 100,000 more.

Tapping into the wealth of Ireland's natural resources is our best opportunity to generate large-scale domestic employment and to kick-start the domestic economy once again. Our natural resources are at the core of three key sectors, which will be the champions of our new domestic economy – Green Energy, Sustainable Food and Green Tourism.

As an open, trading economy Ireland has long relied on growing exports to grow its economy. We currently export €150 billion worth of goods each year and exports are one of the few areas of the economy that is successfully weathering the recession. By focussing on select industries where we have a competitive advantage, we can build on this base and grow our trading capability in high-value, low-carbon products and services. That competitive advantage presents itself most compellingly in three sectors – Traded Creative Services, High-Tech Manufacturing and Financial Services.

#### Green energy

During our time in Government, we oversaw the generation of 15% of our electricity from renewable sources in 2010 and put Ireland on

track to meet our 40% target by 2020. The development of renewable energy resources that can be sold to both the national and international marketplace is crucial to generating local employment.

#### **The Green Party will:**

- Using €500 million from the National Pension Reserve Fund, scale up the National Retrofit Programme so that 100,000 premises will be retrofitted every year. This will mean that 1 million homes will be insulated by 2020 and 25,000 new jobs will be created under the Programme.
- Develop and deliver a roadmap which allows for the development of ocean and tidal energy, with a potential yield of €120 billion to the local economy and these 70,000 jobs.
- Ensure that Ireland participates in the North Seas Offshore Grid Plan.

#### Green tourism

The Green Party believes that tourism remains one of our most important sources of local employment and wealth creation. Our unrivalled reputation puts us in prime position to establish Ireland as a world-leading green holiday destination.

#### **The Green Party will:**

- Introduce a Green Star rating system for Eco Tourism in Ireland.
- Establish an Eco Tourism unit within Fáilte Ireland to coordinate, certify and promote the Green Star initiative.
- Launch a 'Proud Cities' Programme, involving projects such as major new parks, traffic-free areas and eco-communities to demonstrate the benefits of sustainable living.
- Develop the potential for "Food Tourism", starting with "food trails" and the provision of food in public houses, particularly in rural areas.

# PLAYING TO OUR STRENGTHS

- Promote the development of cycling as a growth area for tourism.
- Introduce an All-Ireland Walkways Development Plan, mapping out infrastructural needs and routes and maximising their use. We will pursue the possibility of using former railway infrastructure as recreational trails for walking and cycling etc. in partnership with Iarnród Éireann. We will examine the possibilities of legislating to improve access for walkers.
- Position the suite of Discover Ireland websites as exemplars for an information, content and reservation tourism system, with ease of booking and comprehensive linkages to industry platforms.
- Promote the creation of marinas and youth and child friendly water sports to encourage activity and awareness of our maritime country.

## Sustainable food

Irish farming already boasts an €8 billion export market based on the richness of our land and the talent of our people. This sector employs around 110,000 both directly and indirectly. Farming remains the lifeblood of our rural economy. We can expand this sector by harnessing and growing our international reputation as 'the Green Isle'. By positioning ourselves at the premium quality end of the market, we can in fact create more jobs and more value through lower intensity farming methods.

### **The Green Party will:**

- Ensure the achievement of the target of 5% of land in organic agriculture and meet the growing demand for domestically produced organic produce by providing adequate resources and supports for the achievement of the target, with a focus on import substitution in areas where Ireland is under-producing at present e.g. horticulture. We will step up supports for the Organic

Farming Scheme for conversion to organic production, Capital Grants for the Organic Sector and Non-Capital costs.

- Declare the Republic of Ireland a GM-Free Zone, free from the cultivation of all GM plants.
- To optimise Ireland's competitive advantage as a GM-Free country, we will introduce a voluntary GM-Free logo for use in all relevant product labelling and advertising, similar to a scheme recently introduced in Germany.
- Conduct a review of our National Food Security Policy to develop resilience in food production capacity to future proof against substantial rises in price and diminishing availability of oil and to meet the challenge of Climate Change.
- Promote and support a network of farmers' markets at Local Authority level to encourage more direct selling from producers to consumers.
- Develop a template for the establishment of farm-gate shops and ensure that the necessary legislative arrangements are made to facilitate this.

## Forestry

As home of the best tree-growing conditions in Ireland, forestry has the potential to make a very significant contribution to local enterprise, local employment and Ireland's energy security.

### **The Green Party will:**

- Support greater encouragement of Close to Nature-Continuous Cover non clear-fell forestry management systems to maximise potential employment, whilst also addressing key climate change, energy, economic and ecological priorities.
- Initiate a minimum of 10,000 hectare per annum planting until 2035 with an aim to achieve planting of 15,000 hectare per annum.



- Through planting 10,000 hectare per annum we will deliver 327 new direct sustainable jobs per year, in establishing, managing, harvesting and processing that timber. There would be further valuable 'downstream' employment created.
- Deliver compliance with international sustainable forestry objectives, the enforcement of illegal logging policies, support green procurement initiatives, and biodiversity and heritage criteria.
- Maximise the potential of the forestry industry to contribute to the renewable bioenergy/biomass sector.

## High tech manufacturing

### ***The Green Party will:***

Our strength in research and development remains one of the key attraction points for foreign companies. High Tech Manufacturing in chemicals, pharma and medical devices account for nearly half of Ireland's €150 billion annual export performance.

- Ensure 3% of GDP is invested in Research & Development.
- Increase the funding to Science Foundation Ireland to protect and grow the research base in our priority areas.
- Reform Enterprise Ireland's assessment and grant system so that a much greater emphasis is placed on commercialisation and job creation.

## Traded creative services

There were over 73,000 people employed in ICT in Ireland in 2009, up 6% on the previous year. Our creative services industry holds huge promise and potential for jobs and economic growth. This is only the beginning. Ireland has the opportunity to establish itself as the digital trading hub of Europe. That will require two key ingredients – high-speed broadband and human capital.

### ***The Green Party will:***

- Expand the Exemplar Network into a national network putting Ireland at the cutting edge of connectivity. It is estimated that 5,000 direct jobs and a further 5,000 indirect jobs could be established over a 5-10 year period as a result of the Exemplar Network.
- Work to intensify and accelerate the roll out of Next Generation Broadband Network in order that Ireland can emerge as a global digital player.
- Adapt the regulatory regime to incentivise investment and encourage both competition and collaboration.
- Undertake a major digitisation of government and public services.
- Establish the International Content Services Centre in Dublin. Modelled on the IFSC, the centre will provide a global hub for the trading, commodifying and storing of digital content.
- Over a five year period, provide €70 million for the training of some 20,000 unemployed people who will then work with 100,000 businesses to make their products and services available online.
- Work to ensure that all public and government services are transferred to a cloud-based system.
- Establish a national green standard for data centres and attract more and more FDI into this area, with the potential to create over 10,000 high-value jobs.

## A sustainable construction sector

### ***The Green Party will:***

- Support the development of centres of excellence in sustainable building research, to ensure that Ireland applies cutting edge building science to the design and construction of all new buildings and renovations.

## PLAYING TO OUR STRENGTHS

- Provide supports for manufacturers to develop construction products from suitable waste streams and to develop products that can be reused or recycled beyond their intended use.
- Establish a construction industry strategy to ensure that standards and practice in Ireland keeps ahead of potential export markets, to give Irish industry a competitive advantage.
- Implement a sustainable public procurement action plan to ensure that all public capital works meet high sustainability standards that incrementally tighten over the coming years.

### Supporting small businesses

#### ***The Green Party will:***

- As part of the overall reform of the social welfare system, examine the introduction supports for self employed persons.
- Extend the Employer Job (PRSI) Incentive Scheme.
- Ensure a reduction in commercial rates, made possible by the introduction of site value and water charges.
- Carry out a review of the effectiveness of Employment Subsidy Scheme with a view to examining its reintroduction.
- Work with County Enterprise Boards to continue to support micro-enterprises employing 10 or fewer workers in the start-up and expansion phases.
- Test the legality of upwards-only rent reviews in respect of existing leases.
- Ensure that amendments are made to our Bankruptcy Laws, setting business bankruptcy at a UK equivalent.
- Remove basic hurdles to Green Enterprise by addressing technical, regulatory and planning barriers that are delaying the development of renewable energy projects.

- Improve information access to new ideas and funding opportunities.
- Put in place the structures to ensure that small scale financing is accessible to business start-ups.
- Extend the Web Activate Programme, which takes young unemployed people off the live register and trains them to become self employed as service providers, with a target of turning this into a national programme targeting some 100,000 small Irish businesses and training up to 20,000 participants.
- Harness the resources of our retired corps of business leaders, using their skills, experience, intellectual capital and contacts in a structured way to assist small companies.

### Women in enterprise

- Develop a National Women in Enterprise Network to bring together the expertise and support offered by each County Enterprise Board at present.

### Citizen rights and innovation

To uphold the rights of Irish citizens and to support Irish business in the IT sector, the Green Party will:

- Prevent private organisations from intruding into a citizen's privacy, from summarily punishing citizens for alleged illegal activities and from interfering with citizens' legitimate and legal uses of content.
- Continue to promote digital inclusion and literacy for all citizens.
- Update the role of the Data Commissioner to ensure evolving technologies are in check with the rights of Irish citizens.
- Campaign at EU level to restrict data roaming charges which restrict the usage and development of international digital content services.



- Reject all attempts to allow software ideas to be patentable.

## Pensions

The Green Party believes that the overarching purpose of pension policy should be to help older persons to live in retirement with dignity, security and a good quality of life.

### ***The Green Party will:***

- In line with the National Pensions Framework, support the standardisation of tax relief on pension contributions.
- Ensure that pension pots are taxed at an equivalent rate to ensure equity in the tax treatment of pensions.
- Introduce an optional second tier contributory pension scheme based on contributions from workers, employers and the State.
- Remove tax breaks from contributions to pension schemes.
- Instead, citizens would be offered equivalent tax breaks to contribute to state-backed AVCs in addition to the normal state pension.
- Give workers options at the pensionable age, where they can choose to accept a full pension; choose to work part time and receive a part pension; or continue to work full time with a special tax relief.
- Cap state pensions at a rate of no more than twice the average industrial wage, or €75,000.

## Banking reform

The Irish Banking system engaged in reckless practice which has done untold damage to the economic interests of this country.

We believe that there is a need for a small savers, small scale lending bank run on mutual co-operative principles. A combination of our credit unions, building societies and Post Bank, could provide a viable, alternative

third banking sector this economy needs. Encouraging small savers and lending in small amounts would be just the stimulus for the economy. This third sector could provide the type of small scale lending that can help meet short term needs of people, who in turn by spending more contribute in the economy more, and in so doing help create more jobs.

## Supports for those in mortgage arrears

### ***The Green Party will ensure that the following measures are implemented in full:***

- A new Mortgage Arrears Resolution Process (MARP) which will oblige all lenders to consider alternative payment arrangements for those in arrears.
- Reform of the Mortgage Interest Supplement (MIS) scheme.
- A new voluntary Deferred Interest Scheme be adopted by mortgage lenders.

## Stabilising our Public Finances

### Sale of State assets

The Green Party is strongly opposed to a fire sale approach to the sale of state assets. Given the economic situation and the severe pressures on the public finances, full consideration must be given to making the best use of state assets. However, a number of our semi state companies including Coillte, the ESB, Bord Gáis, Bord na Móna and EirGrid are pivotal contributors to the achievement of energy policy objectives.

# PLAYING TO OUR STRENGTHS

## Fair and sustainable taxation

### Income tax

Budgets 2009 to 2011 saw changes to the income tax system which were aimed at broadening the tax base and bringing income tax revenue back to a sustainable level. Those on higher incomes also saw their taxes rise and the highest marginal rate now stands at 55%. The Green Party believes that the tax system as it applies to income must now be simplified. PRSI should be integrated with the USC in 2012, taking care that no particular income group is unfairly disadvantaged or advantaged. We will ensure that the highest marginal rate of 55% will not be increased.

### Water usage

The Green Party believes that metered water charges – with a free allowance per household – will lead to better use of scarce clean water and provide funds for investment in the water network.

### Site value tax

The Green Party has always been a proponent of a property tax, specifically in the form of a Site Value Tax (SVT) on all land excluding agricultural land. We will introduce a Site Value Tax on a phased basis, ensuring the protection of those who are unable to pay.

### Carbon levy

A carbon levy was introduced by the Green Party in the 2010 Budget as a way of discouraging the use of fossil fuels and encouraging the shift towards a low carbon economy.

### Cap and share

The Green Party believes we should move to a more effective method than a carbon tax to promote the use of renewable fuels. In this respect, we will evaluate a number of schemes such as Cap and Share.

### Fuel poverty

Revenue raised by the carbon levy will contribute to the upscaling of the National Retrofit Programme and will be used to increase the fuel allowance.

### Windfall tax on land speculation

We introduced a windfall tax of 80% on the gains accruing to individuals or companies from disposal of all land over 1 acre valued over 250,000 arising from rezoning decisions. This will help prevent land speculators profiteering from their damaging activities, while providing communities with a source of funding. As part of the next government the Green Party will ensure that this tax is retained.

### Corporation tax

The Green Party supports the retention of our current level of corporation tax.

### Introducing refundable tax credits

Tax credits operate in an inequitable manner with those earning least gaining nothing. The existence of welfare traps, where individuals become worse off by taking a job can be mitigated through the introduction of refundable tax credits. This operates where if an individual has insufficient income to avail of their full tax credit entitlements, the remaining credits are paid as a cash transfer.

### Integrating the tax and welfare systems

The Green Party believes that coupled with our proposal to introduce refundable tax credits, we can simplify the tax and welfare systems while dramatically reducing welfare traps and increasing equity in our society.

In Government, the Green Party will restructure the system so that appropriate welfare benefits are allocated as tax credits instead of cash payments, while payments from the state should be subject to PAYE, given the recipient being in the PAYE tax net.







# ***BETTER LEADERSHIP***

*Transforming  
the political  
system*



## BETTER LEADERSHIP

### Transforming the political system

*The Green Party firmly believes that our current political system has failed the people. The depth of the crisis that the country finds itself in at the moment requires reform at all levels of public life. It is simply not enough to make changes to taxes and spending and hope that a similar situation will not materialise in the future. What is needed is radical reform.*

Within six months of entering a new government, the Green Party will guarantee a range of sweeping constitutional changes which will enable the Irish citizens to change politics and public life in this country. We believe the result will bring about a cheaper, more efficient and better equipped public service, in which the people can have faith.

#### A new constitution

The Constitution is the legal bedrock of the nation. Much of the criticism about the political system and public life that has been made in the last number of years has identified Bunreacht na hÉireann as a cause of many of our problems. The Green Party believes that one of the first actions the next Government should take is to consult with the Irish people to see if they wish to put in place a Citizen's Assembly which would draw up a new draft constitution for the country. The draft constitution would then be put to referendum.

#### **The Green Party will:**

- Within six months of entering Government, hold a referendum on establishing a Citizens Assembly, which would be tasked with drawing up a new draft constitution within 18 months.
- The Government of the day would be constitutionally obliged to put the draft constitution to the country in a referendum, as a proposed replacement for the current Bunreacht na hÉireann.

- The Citizens Assembly would be made up of 40 members, elected from a single national constituency through PRSTV, following the model recently employed in Iceland. There would be a 40% gender quota.

In the event that the initial referendum on establishing a citizens assembly was rejected, the Green Party in Government would then act to bring forward individual proposals for constitutional change to address public concern about specific aspects of the Constitution within 12 months. This would focus on much needed changes to our political institutions: the Dáil, the Seanad and the Presidency.

#### Ending localism in national politics

One of the Green Party's founding principles is that power should be exercised at the lowest effective level. This means that issues that can be dealt with at a local or regional level should be devolved from central government to the appropriate body at a more local level.

#### Dáil Éireann

##### **The Green Party proposes:**

- To reduce the number of TDs from 166 to 120 (a cut of over 25%).
- To have 60 of these elected from single-seat constituencies via STV and to have 60 elected from a national top-up list system.

The top-up system will ensure that proportional representation is maintained and smaller parties are represented in Dáil Éireann in proportion to their overall vote.

The Green Party will also ensure that the Dáil should sit for a fixed five year term. Any early election should only come about by the failure of a Government to win a vote of confidence, and the acceptance by the President that an alternative Government could not be formed.

# BETTER LEADERSHIP

## Seanad Éireann

### ***The Green Party proposes:***

- A cap on the number of Senators at 50 (a cut of 16%).
- Ending the practice of Taoiseach's appointments.
- That 10 Senators would be elected from a panel consisting of graduates of third level institutions across the country.
- The remaining 40 would be elected from a list system, divided across four regional panels based on the European Election constituencies. The possibility of allowing Irish citizens in Northern Ireland and abroad voting for a number of Senators would also be examined.
- Persons choosing to exercise their right to vote on the graduate panel would not be entitled to vote on the regional panels, ensuring each person had only one vote in Seanad.
- Investigate the feasibility of facilitating the election of a number of Senators by Irish citizens in Northern Ireland and overseas.

## Local and regional government

The Green Party will build on the work on local government reform that it has already done in Government. We will increase the powers and democratic accountability of regional authorities, to allow them to take on a range of functions currently exercised at national or local council level. Town Councils and County Councils will be replaced with a new tier of Town/District Councils, which will allow purely local decisions to be taken close to the citizen. We will prioritise the passage of the Dublin Mayor Bill through the Houses of the Oireachtas.

### ***The Green Party proposes:***

- Implement a new regional local government structure responsible for the planning of water, waste, retail, housing and transport services.

- That councillors will be directly elected to strong regional authorities, with a directly elected head enjoying similar powers of the directly elected Mayor of Dublin.
- Basic local government functions will be carried out by a new universal tier of Town/District Councils.
- To Increase the power of the citizen to influence local decisions through the wider use of local plebiscites and participatory budgeting.
- To ensure that in making these proposed changes to local and regional government the overall bill for salaries and expenses will not increase.

## The European Parliament

### ***The Green Party will:***

- Introduce a list system and a national constituency for European Parliament elections.
- Support efforts at European Council level to fix the home of the European Parliament in Brussels and end the financially and environmentally wasteful sitting of the Parliament in Strasbourg.

## Non-constitutional reform

- Oblige all TDs and Senators to produce an annual report setting out, amongst other items, how often they spoke in the Dáil, attended votes, engaged in committee work.
- Provide for Dáil Éireann and Seanad Éireann to sit for 45 weeks of the year, with sittings running from Monday afternoons to Friday lunchtimes with full days starting at 9.30am and ending no later than 7pm. Any changes to this to require a two-thirds majority of the either house.
- The Ceann Comhairle will be given the power to oblige members of the Government to give full and adequate information to the Dáil.



## Women in politics

A number of factors have been identified as barriers to women's full participation in politics, including childcare, family friendly working hours, candidate selection processes and the perception of Irish politics as an 'old boys club.'

### **The Green Party will**

- Amend the system of State funding to political parties so that a proportion of such funding is linked to a requirement for a political party to have at least 40% of its candidates at a general election from both genders. The legislation would include a sunset clause for the ending of gender candidate quotas and would also link political funding to a requirement for 40% of a party's candidates being from both genders at local and European elections.
- Reform the Dáil term to make it more compatible with the school term.
- Provide TDs with the opportunity to take full maternity/ parental leave with a pairing arrangement to cover that period of leave.

## Uachtaran na hÉireann/The President

We believe that this role can be further enhanced through the implementation of a number of key reforms.

### **The Green Party will:**

- Introduce a Citizens' Initiative of 20,000 voters to become an additional means of nominating candidates for the Presidency.
- Abolish the automatic right of re-election, and introduce one term of five years with the possibility of re-election for another five year term.
- Remove the minimum age of 35 years for eligibility and replace with 18 years.

## Transparency

### Ending corporate donations to political parties and candidates

### **The Green Party will:**

- Pass legislation to ensure that only citizens can make political donations and that private bodies including corporations and businesses would be forbidden, and underpin this with a constitutional referendum if necessary.
- Implement the GRECO recommendations on the transparency of political party funding, including requiring political parties to maintain and publish proper accounts.
- Establish an independent Electoral Commission, building on the work already underway in the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government.

## Appointments to state boards

The Green Party in government commenced a process of reforming the way in which people are appointed to State Boards. We will continue this reforming work by implementing an administrative process whereby vacancies for nominations can be advertised. At the same time we will introduce legislation to set this new system on a statutory footing.

- This system will commit all new board vacancies to be advertised, and the relevant Minister and Department will select nominees from these applications.
- Departments will be directed to maintain a register of the directors of state boards under their remit, and will include dates of appointment and expected retirement dates and vacancies.
- The legislation will outline a procedure for the publication of all vacancies likely to occur, invite applications from the general public and from the responses, create a panel of suitable persons for consideration of appointment.
- The legislation will also specify numbers of persons to be appointed by a Minister and will facilitate the appropriate Oireachtas Committees to make nominations to the panel.

# ***A BETTER IRELAND***

*Creating a  
fair, safe and  
sustainable  
society*



## A BETTER IRELAND

### Creating a fair, safe and sustainable society

**We have a vision of an Irish society where all our children are cherished and protected regardless of their background or circumstances, where our older population is truly valued for its contribution to society and can retire in comfort and security and where discrimination and exclusion are not tolerated. We believe that everybody is entitled to live in a safe and diverse community, with easy access to transport, schools and other quality amenities.**

#### Tackling social exclusion

***The Green Party proposes to:***

- Reinstating greater resources for the Office for Social Inclusion.
- Ensure that public policies for social inclusion are integrated into the wider policy framework.
- Commission further data collection on levels and risk of poverty and the development of indicators to measure relative and consistent poverty trends.
- Safeguarding the most vulnerable in society.

#### Reform of the social welfare system

***The Green Party will:***

- Fully integrate the social welfare and taxation systems.
- Remove obstacles from the social welfare system for those who wish to return to casual, part time or voluntary work.
- Apply a Tobin Tax to financial transactions, targeted at financing projects of social dividend.

- Undertake a review of all social welfare payments with a view to standardising payments and reducing differences that currently exist between means-tested and non means-tested rates of entitlements. We will work towards abolishing means-testing for primary payments such as carers allowance and unemployment assistance.
- Remove punitive anomalies such as the limited right to appeal refused payment based on failure to satisfy the Habitual Residence Condition.
- Introduce a tapered benefit withdrawal system for all.
- Adopt a model of social support which includes an earnings related supplement based on previous earnings, to be applied until further employment or retraining is available.
- Implement a system of accreditation for job seekers undertaking work experience or volunteering activity.
- Initiate a programme of reform in the delivery of services within the Department of Social Protection so that the dignity and rights of customers receiving the services are fully respected.

## Children

### Child protection

***The Green Party will:***

- Hold without delay a Referendum on the Rights of the Child, placing the best interests of the child at the heart of our Constitution.
- Implement in full and without exception the recommendations of the Ryan Report.



# A BETTER IRELAND

- Support a change to the Child Care Act to place a statutory obligation on the State to provide aftercare for all children leaving state care.
- Develop a comprehensive national aftercare policy based on the belief that failure to invest in aftercare is a false economy as the cost to the state in later the future in terms of providing homelessness and mental health services.
- Introduce without delay the National Vetting Bureau Bill.

## Protecting the health and wellbeing of our children

### ***The Green Party proposes to:***

- Initiate an audit of local authorities' performance in implementing 'Safe Routes to School' schemes. Local authorities that have not yet implemented such schemes will be given a timeframe within which to do so.
- Further Legislate to curtail alcohol advertising, sponsorship, sales promotion and marketing, and placed health warnings on advertisements and products.
- Ringfence a proportion of revenue received from alcohol sales and direct these funds into linked policy areas, both in the area of drugs and alcohol.
- Target drug prevention programmes specifically to "at risk" groups.
- Develop a national sexual health strategy.

## Eradicating child poverty

### ***The Green Party will:***

- Replace Child Dependent Additions and Family Income Supplement with a targeted second tier payment, paid where children are living in low-income households.

- Prioritise supports for children in single-parent families; nearly half of children in non-working single-parent families live in consistent poverty.

## Youth development and diversion

### ***The Green Party will:***

- Explore the feasibility of allowing for unused buildings to be made available to Youth Sector organisations for provision of services and amenities to young people.
- Reduce the voting age to 16.
- Broaden the parameters of the Office for Ombudsman for Children in regard to legislative matters.
- Ensure the continuation and expansion of the Garda Juvenile Diversion Programme.
- Ensure the continuation of the over 100 Garda Youth Diversion Projects across the country.
- Review the implementation of the Children's Act.
- Resource conferencing which brings together the child, parent(s), Gardaí, educational and social services.

## Carers

### ***The Green Party will:***

- Publish the National Carers Strategy and provide a timetable for implementation.
- Maintain current levels of respite care and home help care.
- Introduce a National Carers Register to combat the 'invisibility' of our carers and also to provide a clear basis for the assessment and planning of services to meet their needs.

## Older persons

### ***The Green Party will:***

- Publish the Positive Ageing Strategy and provide a timetable for the implementation of its agreed recommendations.
- Continue to provide fuel allowance to those who are most at risk of fuel poverty.
- Continue to support the Rural Transport Programme.
- Commission research to investigate how deprivation on particular items is linked to variations in income among older people.
- Seek reciprocity with other EU countries for free or low-cost public transportation.

## Disability

- Ensure the value for money process is complete; ensuring that the outcome provides for a greater level of direct service provision to disabled people from savings in administration.
- Develop mechanisms for personal budgets and introduce direct payments. Disabled people must be enabled to have the maximum choice and control over their own service.
- Ratify the UN Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities.
- Initiate a review of the Disability Act 2005 and engage with disabled people, amending it to give more meaningful legal protection of their rights.
- Ensure the full implementation of national standards and inspection of residential centres and community homes for children and adults with disabilities.
- Give official recognition to Irish Sign Language.

## Same-sex couples

### ***The Green Party will:***

- In the event of the Supreme Court ruling against Zappone and Gilligan, seek to have the Constitution amended to permit civil same-sex marriage.
- Seek to further reform family law in Ireland to protect the welfare of children in a variety of families, including providing for the extension of legal guardianship to de facto parents.

## Women and men

### ***The Green Party will:***

- Examine the possibility of introducing a system allowing fathers take up any remaining unpaid leave if their partner goes back to work early.
- Implement the recommendations of the Law Reform Commission Report on the Legal Aspects of Family Relationships.
- Legislate for fathers to have automatic guardianship of their child from the birth of the child.
- Legislate to ensure the registration of fathers' names on the birth certificates of their child.
- Improve the transparency of family court proceedings through relaxation of In Camera rule.
- Promote recognition of the problem of domestic violence experienced by female and male spouses and partners.
- Continue to fully implement of the National Strategy on Domestic, Sexual and Gender Based Violence.
- Continue to work towards the full implementation of the National Women's Strategy.

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- Explore the reasons for the continued unexplained gender pay gap of 8% and take measures to close the gap.

## Childcare

### ***The Green Party will:***

- Introduce tax incentives for extended family members who are taking care of their grandchildren.
- Maintain the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Scheme which provides a free year of early childhood care and education for children of pre-school age.

## Integration

### ***The Green Party will:***

- Protect funding for English Language classes.
- Develop a learning programme and examination on Irish culture and history for those applying for citizenship.
- Ensure further training for Gardaí, HSE and other key public sector organisations in cultural sensitivity.
- Review the third-level education tuition fee structures to ensure people with an established immigration history are not excluded by prohibitive costs.
- Tackle racism and xenophobia as a national priority through education and awareness-raising initiatives and monitoring of racist incidents nationally.

## Travellers

### ***The Green Party will:***

- Recognise Travellers as a minority ethnic group.
- Ensure that Travellers have greater access to counselling and to Mental Health services to help tackle the extremely high rate of suicide amongst young men in the community.

- Carry out an audit of local authorities in relation to the delivery and implementation of Traveller Accommodation Programmes.

## Homelessness

### ***The Green Party will:***

- Continue to prioritise funding for homelessness programmes.
- Work to realise the goal of ending long term homelessness and the need to sleep rough.
- Ensure the full and timely implementation of the The Way Home: A Strategy to Address Adult Homelessness in Ireland.
- Seek to provide a dedicated funding stream for long term housing support to be administered by the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government.
- Seek to reduce the length of time a person must be on Rent Supplement before becoming eligible for the Rental Accommodation Scheme from 18 to six months.
- Provide for a reliable annual count of all people in homeless services using the 'Counted In' method.
- Prioritise a review of the Youth Homelessness Strategy, published in 2001.

## Excellence in education for future generations

In Government, the Green Party protected education by: maintaining pupil-teacher ratios; reversing severe education cuts in Budget 2009; and stopping a reintroduction of third level fees.

### ***The Green Party will:***

- Work towards increasing investment in Education to meet 7% of GDP.
- Reject any recommendations in the Hunt



Report that would result in students incurring penal debt. As part of the next government, the Green Party will carry out a comprehensive review of the funding of the third level system, with a view to ensuring equality and accessibility for all students.

- Review the Education Act to look at issues such as Boards of Management, patronage and enrolment. Reform school Boards of Management to be more open and transparent to parents students and staff, with student feedback. This would include a transition to a system of management linked to local government, similar to the UK (LEA) system for Education.
- Retain existing pupil teacher ratio in primary and secondary schools.
- Extend the one year free pre school to all preschool children.
- Improve investment in Information and Communications Technology (ICT) utilising modern broadband services and cloud computing technology to deliver greater access to all students in a more cost effective manner.
- Teacher Training at Primary Level to include more comprehensive modules on Maths, Languages and Science.
- Implement key recommendations of the report on school behaviour, School Matters, including new measures to tackle disruptive students such as specialised units.
- Review teaching training modules every three years to ensure that best practice is the norm at every level. Ensure that Post Grad Teacher Training is not privatised by increasing the number of Post Grad teacher training places in State Teacher Training Colleges.
- Fast-track the full implementation of the 2004 EPSEN Act. Ensure the complete roll out on a strict timetable of the Education for Person with Special Needs Act.

- Ensure that the Department of Education and Skills develops and implements a strategic action plan to address homophobic bullying and ensure schools and colleges provide a safe environment for LGB students.
- Develop energy efficient, multi-use school buildings as 'community campuses' providing a range of services that can adapt flexibly as a community develops.
- Develop and introduce a 'healthy schools' meals policy, building on existing pilot projects, and implement it gradually across the country.

## Adult education

### ***The Green Party will:***

- Target Investment in Adult Education including measurable accredited training – leading to self sufficiency.
- Remove the cap on numbers in PLCs.
- Implement key recommendations of the McIver Report on the further education sector, immediate priorities will include the establishment of a new, distinct sector of Further Education.
- Promote accredited Community Education.

## **A Healthier Ireland – Prioritising health in our communities**

### ***A single tier universal public healthcare system accessible to all.***

The Green Party believes that healthcare services are a human right. This means that everyone, rich or poor, young or old should have fair access to a decent public health service. Healthcare should depend on what we need, not on what insurance we have, how much we earn, who we know or where we live.

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## ***The Green Party will:***

- Phase out all tax breaks for private healthcare and private health insurance over a period of five years.

## ***The Green Party believes:***

Private business (general practice or hospital) can have a useful role in providing services on contract to the Public Health Service if they are able to do so at a high standard and lower cost than publicly owned services.

## Healthcare in the community

### ***The Green Party will:***

- Provide for free visits to GPs and other health professionals at a local level (similar to the system in Northern Ireland and Britain) where everyone is registered with a primary care team and where we can get our primary healthcare needs attended to locally.
- Eliminate the need for tax incentives and concessions for the purchase or provision of private healthcare services and private health insurance and reallocate them to public healthcare provision.
- Ensure that the costs to the public healthcare delivery system arising from investigations or treatment commenced in the private sector should be borne entirely by the private healthcare provider.
- When services are moved from hospitals to the community the money and resources must move with the services.
- Ensure that the most cost effective medications are used (including “generic drugs”).
- Ensure that appropriate alternative and complementary health practices are integrated into the health service.
- Ensure that maternity services are fully integrated into the community via primary care teams, with a much greater emphasis on midwifery led care.

- Adopt a community based approach allowing us to grow old and to die with dignity in our own communities, supporting active retirement and hospice outreach.

## Hospital care

### ***The Green Party will:***

- Scrap any decisions to subsidise building of private hospitals on public land.
- Ensure that the financial cost of private activity in public hospitals be fully recouped from the private sector.

## Mental health

### ***The Green Party will:***

- Ensure a minimum of 12% of the health budget will go to mental health.
- In order to realise the commitments made in ‘A Vision for Change’, we will introduce legislation to ensure that mental health services move from institutional settings to the community.
- Make appropriate amendments to the Mental Health Act 2001 to address concerns regarding involuntary committals and procedures.
- Ensure that adequate support services for mental health are put in place as part of all primary care teams.
- Initiate cross departmental action on mental health, bringing together departments with responsibility for social inclusion, disability, employment and education.
- Ensure the continuation of the HSE-National Office of Suicide Prevention LGBT Mental Health Programme.

## Sustainability of the healthcare System

### ***The Green Party will:***

- Initiate a public debate which consults all relevant stakeholders, including patients’ representatives, public representatives

and health professionals regarding the establishment of a single tiered healthcare system.

- Support integrated planning and policy objectives within the healthcare system, covering primary, secondary and tertiary care. Integrated funding and reporting structures which cover both the public and private healthcare providers should be developed.
- Carry out root and branch reform of the HSE to ensure that its decision making processes are transparent and that it permits a reasonable measure of autonomy to local healthcare service delivery agencies in terms of how they achieve their targets. This will allow local communities and local representatives to have an important role in deciding local priorities for health and healthcare.
- Ensure that funding for healthcare reflects principles of transparency and accountability. The Green Party believes that all healthcare delivery systems, private and public must be required to present an annual report on complaints and adverse outcomes.
- Prioritise health prevention and promotion programmes by increasing their proportion of the overall health budget in an effort to encourage a healthier population and maximise existing resources.

## Alcohol

- Seek to address the human and economic cost burden of Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders (FASD) in line with International best practices.
- Ensure that all alcoholic drinks carry a label warning of the significant health risks to the developing fetus of drinking in pregnancy.

## Water flouridation

During our recent term of Government the Green Party pursued the implementation of the commitment in the agreed Programme

for Government to carry out a national study of the total flouride intake in the population. We believe that this commitment should be further pursued, and as part of the next Government we will ensure it is delivered.

## Well planned, sustainable communities

***The days of haphazard development that underpinned the complete absence of proper planning Ireland are over. The Green Party is proud of the significant reforms it made to planning laws in Ireland while in government.***

***The Green Party will:***

- Ensure the full implementation of the fundamental reforms contained in the Planning & Development (Amendment) Act 2010 to support economic recovery address the legacy of overzoning, create walkable, sustainable communities, regulate quarries and place environmental protection at the heart of the planning system.
- Require that all future development is future-proofed for climate change and peak oil and is aligned with proper infrastructure provision, particularly public transport, community facilities, green spaces, allotments, schools and water services.
- Protect the vitality and viability of our cities and towns and protect small retailers by maintaining the cap on retail floorspace and ensuring that new retail development is prioritised in town centres.
- Ensure thriving and economically sustainable rural communities through revitalising our historic network of small market towns and villages and supporting rural economic diversification.
- Further amend the Planning & Development Regulations to ensure greater transparency in the planning process and to ensure residents are fully consulted and have an equal say in all major planning decisions.



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- Implement the strong enforcement provisions in the new legislation by requiring planning authorities to establish designated performance-driven planning and environmental enforcement teams.
- Ensure that guidelines on flood risk management are implemented to prohibit building in flood plains.
- Implement the National Landscape Strategy to protect our cultural landscapes as a major tourist resource.

## Unfinished housing developments

### ***The Green Party will:***

- Support the ongoing work of Unfinished Housing Developments Expert Group in devising long-term sustainable solutions for unfinished housing developments.
- Instigate a policy that engages local people in a forum to debate what should happen to the unfinished estates in their area. The local authority, through their community officer, will facilitate this process.
- Explore the drafting of a template agreement to be made available to land owners and community groups to allow for the use of unused sites for allotments and other community projects, with the understanding that this arrangement may be for a limited period.

## Sustainable and smarter transport

The Green Party has a long held vision of a sustainable transport system for Ireland. This means a transport system which acknowledges the threats of climate change and peak oil and uses smart and innovative solutions. We need to protect our transport system against sharp rises in energy prices. Our dependence on the private car as a mode of transport leaves us particularly vulnerable to any sustained rise in oil prices.

## Prioritise investment in public, not private, transport

- Reorganise a Capital Investment programme around the Smarter Travel Policy, recognising that Transport 21 has been based on undeliverable economic growth projections.
- Prioritise investment in public transport over roads by a ratio of 3:1.
- Work to introduce a form of road pricing scheme and ring fence its revenues for cheaper public transport and to maintain the road network.
- Progressively enhance the role of the National Transport Authority to encompass decision-making power over agencies such as the NRA, the RPA and CIE.
- Pilot a flat fee local public transport with the gradual introduction of integrated ticketing; for example €2 for 2 hours. Tickets will be transferable between different modes.

## Improving our rail network

- Prioritise the construction of the DART Underground Interconnector rail line.
- Prioritise the delivery of Metro North.
- Advance Phase 2 and progress planning for Phase 3 of the Western Rail Corridor
- Complete all phases of the Navan Rail Project.
- Enhance the Cork Commuter Rail Network through the building of planned new stations, Park & Ride facilities.
- Re-examine the potential for passenger services through the Phoenix Park Tunnel in the short term while the Interconnector is being planned.
- Adopt the Community Rail Partnership approach to run rural and lightly used rail lines as opposed to closing them.
- Develop a new management, planning and marketing strategy aimed at enticing new

rail freight business in order to revitalise the industry and open up freight services to competition to provide a more reliable and efficient service.

- Introduce Real Time Passenger Information at all railway stations and halts.

## Road transport

- Rather than building new roads, resources should now be targeted at maintaining the existing network to achieve better value for money and improve road safety. The Green Party would therefore not advance any new road schemes as part of the next Government and would instead channel funding to maintain and repair the existing network.

## Buses

- Increase subvention to Dublin Bus and Bus Éireann to enable cheaper public transport fares through revenues from road pricing.
- Prioritise the rapid rollout of Real Time Passenger Information (RTPI) to over 500 bus stops in Dublin, having such information available on SMS and the Internet. hroughout the country. We will extend this RTPI service to bus stops in towns and cities in the country.
- Continue the reform of the Dublin Bus Network, following on from the successful phases of Network Direct.

## Cycling and walking

- Support Dublin City Council in increasing the number of bicycles within the Dublin Bikes Scheme, according to consumer demand and demography, and work with the relevant local authorities to introduce a similar system in Galway, Cork & Limerick.
- Introduce a 'hierarchy of care' system similar to that in Scandinavia, Germany and the Netherlands, which gives motorists a greater legal responsibility for the safety of vulnerable road users.

- Plan for and implement a new national cycle network to provide safe commuting routes into urban centres and promote both local and long distance recreational cycling should be introduced.
- Engage with Local Authorities to ensure that cycle facilities such as bicycle lanes and bicycle parking are cleaned regularly and kept free from parked vehicles.
- Progress key city cycle routes such as the Sutton to Sandycove cycle track in Dublin and an Oranmore to Barna track in Galway.
- Introducing car free zones in major cities on Sundays for particular times at weekends to allow for safe cycling in city centre locations.
- Introduce cycle training in schools as part of the curriculum.
- Continue to develop a National Walking Policy with provision of safe pedestrian routes linked, where appropriate, with public transport services, at its core
- Finance the construction and enlargement of footpaths, proper drainage, traffic calming and the prioritizing of pedestrians at traffic lights.

## Rural transport

- Work with Iarnród Éireann to focus more management attention on rural railway lines. Apply the Community Rail Partnership approach to the marketing of rural rail and to link it with the Rural Transport Programme.
- Retain funding for the Rural Transport Scheme. We will work with transport providers to an integrated rural transport network to ensure that all communities have at least a minimum daily service, proportionate to their population and connecting where feasible with other transport modes. Coordinate existing transport resources more effectively through the National Transport Authority.

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- Encourage the clustering of residential development near existing villages.

## Private vehicles

- Continue to incentivise the purchase of low emission vehicles through the motor tax system.
- Promote eco driving and a more efficient use of roads. We will introduce a road pricing scheme which will target reducing traffic congestion, and use the revenue raised to support public transport on a national basis.
- Promote Car Share access and the expansion of Park & Ride facilities for areas still out of reach of Public Transport in the immediate future.

## Electric vehicles

- The Green Party in Government made great progress in the area of Electric Vehicles, setting ambitious and achievable targets toward creating a situation whereby 10% of All Vehicles on Irish roads are electric-powered by 2020, including a €5,000 Grant toward new purchases
- The Green Party will work to expand Electric vehicles as a share of the Private Vehicle fleet.

## Safer Communities

### An Garda Síochána

The Green Party believes that the prevention and detection of crime along with addressing the needs of victims crime are of equal importance. In order to achieve this balance, we need a modern, well equipped police force.

#### ***The Green Party will;***

- Ensure the provision of continued professional training and education within the force.

- Implement new disciplinary regulations, new promotion regulations and a whistleblowers charter and act on the findings of Justice Morris.

- Ensure that the recommendations made by Justice Barr arising from the Abbeylara incident are implemented in full.
- Address IT deficiencies in Garda Stations across the country.
- Introduce external supervision and counselling service for Gardaí following traumatic experiences.
- Ensure that all Garda trainees receive comprehensive training in victim's care and victim's issues as part of their training.

## Reform of the prison system

The recurring problems of recidivism, overcrowding and psychiatric issues in our prison system need to be addressed immediately.

#### ***The Green Party will;***

- Establish a Working Group on Penal Reform to develop alternatives to custody.
- Abolish plans to relocate Mountjoy to Thornton Hall and instead review options to refurbish and extend the present building.
- Remove children under the age of 18 from St Patrick's Institution.
- Legislate to place the Inspector of Prisons on a fully independent and statutory footing.
- Explore the possibility of establishing an Ombudsman for Prisons.
- Ratify the Optional Protocol to the UN Convention against Torture (OPCAT) to ensure national monitoring of places of detention is effective and independent.
- Explore the possibility of developing an after-prison support system, with one agency coordinating fully integrated supports for accommodation, education, employment.



## Human trafficking

Ireland needs to play a stronger role in the detection and elimination of human trafficking.

### ***The Green Party will;***

- Introduce legislation which follows the Swedish model in making it illegal for a man to buy sex.
- Introduce legislation which criminalises human trafficking.
- Legislate to ensure the protection of victims of trafficking.
- Support awareness campaigns of human trafficking.
- Explore the possibility of introducing a multi-agency centre to provide a central point for the development of expertise and cooperation in relation to the trafficking of human beings similar to the the United Kingdom Human Trafficking Centre [UKHTC].

## White collar crime

We must take measures to ensure that 'white collar' or corporate crime is treated by the authorities with the same efficiency and stringency as any other type of crime.

- Continue the work already initiated by the Green Party and re-establish a Cabinet sub-committee to consider all aspects of fraud and white-collar criminality
- Explore the possibility of holding a referendum to introduce non-jury trials involving a panel of people with specialist knowledge to allow for the courts to deal with complicated prosecutions in the financial sector.
- Examine the introduction of a whistleblower's charter, similar to that in the UK, as a way of making white-collar cases easier to successfully prosecute.
- Draft legislation based on the Private

Members' Bill moved by Trevor Sargent in December 2010, which is aimed at amending the definition of treason in the Constitution to include economic treason.

## Victims of crime

The Green Party agrees that a rebalancing of the criminal justice system to favour the victims of crime is long overdue.

### ***The Green Party will;***

- Set down a timeline for the full implementation of the Victim's Charter.
- Establish a system of monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of the Victim's Charter.
- Review the work of the Commission for the Support of Victims of Crime and conduct an audit of the victims support services around the country in order to ensure greater coordination and cohesion between victim's caring groups.
- Ensure widespread promotion of the National Crime Victims' Helpline.

## Direct provision

- The system of Direct Provision requires those seeking asylum or leave to remain to live in the State assigned accommodation centres. Asylum seekers are not allowed to work or study and are dependent on the allowance of €19.10 per week for adults and €9.60 for children. The Green Party believes that this system must be reviewed as a matter of urgency with a view to replacing it with a more humane system. In government we will prioritise this work.

## International affairs

***The Green Party will work with coalition partners to ratify the following conventions and protocols without further delay:***

- Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

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- Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment.
- International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearances.
- Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.
- International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families.

### **The Green Party:**

- Reaffirms its support for the work and instruments of the Good Friday Agreement.
- Supports all efforts to widen the Nuclear non proliferation treaty and is against nuclear weapons in all their forms.
- Will, in government, and through the UN, the EU and other international fora, work to keep up pressure for change in Burma.
- Has consistently supported an independent state for the Palestinian people alongside the state of Israel. The so-called security wall built by the Israeli government must be removed and Palestinian groups must recognise the right of the State of Israel to exist if they wish to be included in the peace process. The Green Party supports those who advocate a two state solution.

### Commitment to overseas development aid

Ireland has a strong international reputation in overseas development and international aid. The government, Irish NGOs and the Irish public together have made a very important contribution in these areas. The Green Party is dedicated to ensuring that we retain this good reputation by reaffirming our commitment to deliver 0.7% of GNP and advocating for delivery of the UN Millennium Development Goals.

### **The Green Party will:**

- Reaffirm Ireland's commitment to deliver on all eight UN Millennium Development Goals by 2015. We advocate for a financial transaction tax to fund the Millennium Development Goals.
- Ensure that Ireland will deliver on the commitment that our overseas development aid should reach 0.7% of GNP and will publish a plan of year-by-year increases to achieve this.
- Seek that aid, as well as addressing basic human needs, should assist in developing democratic structures.
- Include aid measures to combat the effects of climate change, which impact on developing countries hardest.
- Continue to support Fair Trade goods, including in Government purchasing policy.

## Maintaining a vibrant artistic and cultural life

***The Green Party has long been a strong advocate for the arts, and we successfully fought to ensure the viability of the arts in Ireland during our time in government. In successive budgets, the Green Party protected arts funding from further cuts. We also secured the future of the Irish Film Board when it was at threat of being scrapped.***

***The Green Party will continue to support the artistic community through the following measures:***

- Ensure the continued representation for the Arts and Culture at Cabinet.
- Maintain current levels of funding to the statutory agencies for the arts, including Irish Film Board, Culture Ireland and the Arts Council.
- Legislate to expand the definition of the arts as currently laid out in the Arts Act.

- Through the Department of Education and Skills, ensure that contemporary art education is introduced at primary and secondary level to grow artists and audiences for the future.
- In recognition of the vital role the film industry plays in bringing investment into this country, we will ensure the continuance of the Section 481 tax breaks for the industry.
- Ensure that Local Authorities allocate sufficient funding to allow the fulfilment of long-term strategic cultural and arts planning.
- Recognising the role that technology and innovation will play in the future of our artistic and cultural life, we will seek to form joint ventures between our enterprise and tourism bodies and our artistic and cultural organisations.
- In order to incentivise audiences and improve access to arts events, we will initiate a subsidised money-off vouchers scheme. Each individual in the state with a PRSI

number will be issued with a €5 voucher which can be used as part payment for any Arts Council certified event.

## The Irish language

The Irish language is an important cultural resource for the people of Ireland, but it is a vulnerable and damaged resource which needs to be protected.

### ***The Green Party will:***

- Ensure the full implementation of the 20 Year Strategy for Irish which we assisted in developing during our time in government.
- Establish an Irish Language Unit in the Department of the Taoiseach in order to ensure that the Official Languages Act is implemented in every part of government.
- Ensure that government departments do not use translators who do not have the official seal of Foras na Gaeilge.
- Oversee a comprehensive review of the teaching and learning of Irish at primary and post-primary level both in the Republic and in Northern Ireland.



# ***A GREEN VISION FOR IRELAND***

*Protecting the  
environment  
for future  
generations*



# A GREEN VISION FOR IRELAND

## Protecting the environment for future generations

**In government the Green Party implemented a significant body of policy and legislation in the areas of climate change and environmental protection including:**

- Publication of the Climate Change Bill 2010.
- Introduction of a Carbon Tax.
- Integration of Carbon Budgeting into the Annual Budgetary Process.
- Initiation of a Public Consultation Process on Waste Management Policy
- Passing into law of the Planning and Development Act 2010.
- Introduction of crucial changes to the Motor Tax and VRT systems.
- Drafted the Noise Nuisance Bill.

### Climate change

In December, the Green Party published the Climate Change Response Bill 2010. The Bill sets out a robust statutory basis to strengthen the national response to climate change.

**Key provisions include;**

- Ambitious but realistic national greenhouse gas emission reduction targets for 2020, 2030 and 2050;
- A new national planning process encompassing both mitigation and adaptation;
- A new annual process on reporting to the Oireachtas; and
- A new Expert Advisory Body to advise Government on policy and implementation.

The objective of this piece of legislation is to reinforce Government policy on positioning Ireland as a responsible country on climate change, with a progressive policy response focussed on transition to a low-carbon, climate resilient and environmentally sustainable future. Transition aims to address the challenges and embrace the opportunities that climate change presents for Ireland and to significantly reduce our over-dependence on imported sources of fossil fuel energy.

***As part of the next government, the Green Party will prioritise the passage of this vital piece of legislation through the Houses of the Oireachtas.***

### Taking Ireland beyond oil

The Green Party has warned for quite some time now that we are close to reaching peak oil. Peak oil is the point in time when the maximum rate of global petroleum extraction is reached, after which the rate of production enters terminal decline.

The Green Party believes that the onset of peak oil represents an opportunity for Ireland to utilise the bountiful natural resources available to us to become an Oil Free Economy.

In this respect we look to the Sweden's goal, announced in 2006, that it will become an Oil Free Economy by 2020.

With our unique geographical, climatic and human-capital advantages, this move will send a very clear signal to the global community that the direction of public policy in Ireland is unambiguous and that Ireland is a prime location for long-term investment opportunities

***As part of the next government, the Green Party implement a strategy to set Ireland on the road to being an Oil Free Economy by 2030.***

# A GREEN VISION FOR IRELAND

## Animal Welfare

Animal welfare is of great concern to the Green Party and we will continue to build on our significant work to date as part of the next government by undertaking the following measures:

- Pass into law the Animal Health and Welfare Bill, which outlaws fur farming and the culling of badgers.
- Examine the possibilities of alternatives to live animal exports from Ireland.
- Make it a requirement for all retail outlets to label animal derived material such as fur and/or leather, regardless of the percentage of fur and/or leather in the items.
- Prohibit the trade in animal fur products.
- Implement legislation to end the importation of and trade in exotic species.
- Introduce legislation to ban hare coursing.
- Make the hunting of animals with hounds an offence under law.
- Replace the culling of badgers with more effective and humane methods of control.
- End the use of exotic animals in circuses in the long term. In the short term issue a Ministerial Directive to all Local Authorities prohibiting them from providing land to circuses that use exotic animals in their acts.

## Genetic modification

The Green Party will pursue the introduction of a voluntary GM-free logo, which will take advantage of our predominantly grass fed beef and dairy cattle, and build on the 'Brand Ireland' strategy to differentiate and add value to our produce.

### **The Green Party will:**

- Establish a GM-Free regulatory authority to ensure that rigorous testing is put in place to verify that animal feed is free of GM inputs.

- Veto any EU proposed legislation that would allow a certain threshold for GM contamination in conventional seeds before the seeds had to be labelled as containing GM traces.

## Waste

As Minister for the Environment, John Gormley commenced a process to introduce new levies for landfill and incineration which will increase the existing levy on landfill and introduce a new one for incinerators. As part of the next government, the Green Party will ensure that these levies are introduced without delay.

The Green Party believes that Mechanical Biological Treatment can offer a much more environmentally friendly method of residual waste treatment than mass burn incineration, and will continue to advocate for the former technology as a means of responsible waste disposal.

## Domestic waste collection

As a party to the next government, the Green Party will continue to transform Ireland's waste system by implementing the following minimum standards for domestic waste collection:

- A collection of paper and card for recycling at least fortnightly.
- Collection of textiles for recycling at least monthly.
- Collection of food waste at least weekly.
- Collection of steel and aluminium cans at least fortnightly.
- A collection of plastic bottles at least fortnightly.
- A collection of glass containers at least fortnightly.
- Bring banks with a density of at least 1 per 600 inhabitants.

## Water

Decades of neglect and overuse were highlighted during the severe weather at the start and end of 2010, when widespread water shortages illustrated the need for a more efficient system.

### ***The Green Party will:***

- Ensure the complete roll out of metering nationwide, with every household given a free basic allowance of water as per the renewed programme for government. Establish an ombudsman, or other independent authority, to decide on disputes to do with water meters and water charging, or assign this responsibility to an existing relevant authority.
- Provide low income households with assistance to deal with the introducing of water charging, and provide support for the

installation of water efficient appliances in low income households.

- Make rainwater harvesting mandatory in all new developments.
- Focus on meeting our water needs now and in the future by reducing demand and getting the most from existing infrastructure before undertaking major new engineering projects, which have big environmental and economic costs.
- Review and reform national structures of water governance.
- Focus on maintaining and improving drinking water quality through the protection of important river catchments.
- Protect aquatic sites with the highest conservation and biodiversity value.



## NOTES

This image shows a single page of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.



